

June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013

## THE GENERATIONAL GAP INTEGRATION – BOOMERS Vs. X, Y & Z.

By Sonia Clayton, CEO

Is traditional organizational change management becoming obsolete?

Of course! The world is changing and the fabric of America today is made of a brand new generational mix. As a result, and for the first time in history, there are four generations spanning a six-decade age range in the workforce: **Traditionalists** (born before 1945), **Baby Boomers** (1946-1964), **Generation X** (1965-1977) and **Generation Y** (1978-1989). So, understanding and capitalizing on generational changes can be a huge benefit and performance improvement opportunity for organizations today.

The social, cultural and behavioral variances among these groups reflect far more than chronological age. Each generation has distinctive work styles, motivational triggers, preferences, professional objectives, and they respond to different styles of leadership and rewards. The new demographics of the workforce mix has been impacted by socio-economic shifts as well as the globalization of the work force. Other factors are the ever-increasing dependency of technology and the pressure to achieve and improve the goal of work and life balance.

The fact that our world is changing at an ever-accelerating rate is probably self-evident, however it has been documented. Books such as ***The World is Flat*** (Friedman, 2005) have done a great job at describing a world that is unlike any we have known before. In the book titled ***The Global Achievement Gap***, Tony Wagner describes the changing world and the subsequent educational deficiencies (2008) and in The history of educational “catch-up” is efficiently chronicled in the book ***21 Century Skills*** by Trilling & Fadel (2009).

The aforementioned works, and a great variety of research, basically tell us that our “new generations” have a completely new set of skills, new styles of learning and a new definition of “success” that is constantly mutating with technological evolution. So, if that is the case what is the recipe for corporate success while driving Organizational Change? How do we define 21st Century skills, how do you systematically implement and measure change and how do we integrate the new generational mix?

Allow me to make some recommendations on how you can drive a **Generational Gap Integration** and a true organizational transformation.

Tip #1: ANALYZE - Corporations must learn about their very own “Generational Mix” and strategically define particular strengths, insights and motivators of each generation and their distinct competitive advantages for the enterprise in the years to come.

Tip # 2: APPRECIATE the differences –Value all age groups in the work place. Perspectives vary on each generation. Remember their views were formed through defining life events and experiences.

Tip # 3: RETHINK YOUR WORK ENVIRONMENT – Employers must be in line with the needs and expectations of today and tomorrow’s workers, and that begins with the understanding of the generational differences and the closing of several gaps.

Tip # 4: LEARN FROM the differences – Show a sincere desire to understand other generations within your work place environment. Spend quality time with your teams in this effort.

Tip # 5: UNDERSTAND - Senior in control? It is time to understand that if you are in control, you maybe the dinosaur in technology. So be aware of differences, be open minded, be honest and do try not hide your weaknesses, learn to ask for help, learn to collaborate, be enthusiastic about learning new technologies and avoid stereotyping.

Tip # 6: MENTOR - Mentoring is as critical as encouraging employees from different generations. Defining a strategic, bilateral mentoring program is a great arrangement that will benefit all parties involved because the mentor and the protégé will soon discover that they can learn many things from one another. Team up veteran employees with a less experienced team members and soon you will see a true succession planning strategy in execution.

Tip # 6: ENCOURAGE AND MOTIVATE – Use immediate positive reinforcement. Do not hesitate or delay feed-back. Act with immediacy and demonstrate honest appreciation. Notify and publish progress and celebrate successes. Use social and corporate networking to track progress, to follow progress and share generous positive reinforcement.

In today's market place a 20 to 30 year gap exists between the expectations baby boomers and the latest generations. Hence, our leadership practices and organizational culture are becoming obsolete. Our new generations are beginning to talk and our young talent is asking for is a reflection of this profound shift.

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#### About the Author:

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- How do we attract and retain workers from the younger generations?
- How do we keep young workers motivated?
- What about more mature workers? Can we find new ways to keep them in the workforce?
- How do we prepare our new generations for leadership?